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A review of Link Ethiopia's sponsorship programme: learning from small stories

Liz Chamberlain

This report highlights the small stories of nine participants who are part of Link Ethiopia's sponsorship programme. Link Ethiopia has celebrated 20 years of work in Ethiopia, and it is dedicated to changing lives through education and increasing cultural awareness among young people in Ethiopia and the UK. There are currently over 200 students who are part of the programme that aims to provide resources to children and young people with the aim of reducing potential barriers to learning. The nine children and guardians featured in this report speak highly of the programme and value its contribution in supporting individual educational and career aspirations. The report discusses the children and young people's perceptions of being part of the programme and the role of Link Ethiopia in supporting their educational ambitions, before outlining potential areas for improvement.

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PREFACE

A review of Link Ethiopia's sponsorship programme: learning from small stories

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The following report drew on a research trip to Gondar, Bishoftu, and Bahir Dar in June 2015, facilitated by Link Ethiopia (London and Gondar). The researcher undertook fieldwork, data collection and analysis, and wrote the report in the capacity as a volunteer for Link Ethiopia.

The audience for the report remains with Link Ethiopia, but the author reserves the right to share the findings through academic networks, for example, conference proceedings or published papers. Any potential use by a third party needs to be discussed with the author or Link Ethiopia.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this report is to open up a discussion around Link Ethiopia's Child Sponsorship programme. The programme has been in existence since 2008 and, in that time, it has not been evaluated beyond its annual monitoring report, which is undertaken on an internal level. Therefore, as a small-scale research report with limited scope, both in terms of time and access to participants, the purpose of this report is to respond to the key questions raised by Link Ethiopia staff, in both the Gondar and Bishoftu offices (see Key issues below). As a consequence of the recommendations suggested at the end of this report, Link Ethiopia staff may wish to consider possible future research and lines of inquiry. The 'small stories' (Georgakapoulou, 2007) of eight students are the key driver of this report and an attempt is made to position the children as a random, yet representative, sample of the whole cohort of 202 students who are part of the programme.

SECTION 1

Background

According to the Link Sponsorship Guidelines Link Ethiopia works to improve the learning experiences of vulnerable Ethiopian children and help provide them with the best possible access to quality education. More specifically, their core belief is that 'Access to quality education is an inherent right of all children' (Link Ethiopia, 2015:5). There are three categories of sponsorship, Standard, Bespoke and Further Sponsorship, and for the purpose of this report, only children in the Standard Sponsorship programme are included. The Standard sponsorship model relies on regular donations from a named benefactor that provides a set of resources to support the child's

access to education. The Bespoke and Further Sponsorship schemes provide tailor-made support based on individual need, therefore, evaluating the Standard Sponsorship model may allow for comparison between children's experiences.

The Link Ethiopia Sponsorship Coordinator, and/or school/learning institution identifies students who they consider would benefit from joining the sponsorship programme; to be eligible, a student must meet the criteria for being a 'vulnerable beneficiary' (p.9). There are a number of national and governmental measures used to identify children who fit this category, and these are presented in more detail in Section Three. Once identified as being eligible, students can expect to remain part of the programme until they finish education; this may be on completion of Grades 11 and 12 (end of preparatory school), at the end of tertiary education, or in the case of university students when they graduate. The Standard Sponsorship programme has alumni who met all of these levels of education with one student leaving the programme at 25 years old after graduating from University.

The aim of the sponsorship programme meets one of Link Ethiopia's core aims which is to *limit barriers to learning* by removing some of the additional costs parents/guardians must meet in order for a student to attend school. At the core of the offer is the provision of school books and stationery. In addition, up to two pairs of shoes are provided annually, so students are able to walk to school. Students also receive an annual health check and, in some instances, where medical issues are raised with hospital cost implications, the Sponsorship Coordinator may contact the student's sponsor to request an additional donation. Prior to any additional contact with the sponsor, Link Ethiopia would assess whether the student is suitable for Contingency Fund support, which is utilised to support family needs on a temporary basis while adjustments or changes are made to the sponsorship if necessary. Situations where the Contingency Fund are used may be: medical emergencies pending on the student's geographical location they visit the Link Ethiopia office in the north (Gondar) or in the south (Bishoftu) to collect their school uniform and stationery including: school books, a bag and additional school items including pens, pencils, rulers, compasses.

There are additional and discretionary costs that may also be covered with examples including transport costs or additional tuition (to cover the cost of a teacher/tutor's salary). A percentage (45%) of the £15 a month sponsors donate contributes to wider community projects including the provision of toilets and clean running water or to improve the school library. In this way, the sponsorship programme benefits those in the wider local or school community. For example, an improvement in the school library and quality of children's books has the potential to benefit up to 1,000 students.

SECTION 2

Research rationale

Previous in-house evaluations have reviewed the nature of the support offered by the sponsorship programme as a way of quality assuring the programme. Up until 2015, there had been no

external evaluation or review of the experiences of those who directly benefit from the Programme, the students and their families. In recent months, Link Ethiopia has been in discussion with a UK university about the potential of Master's students on the International Development Education programme to undertake in-country research in Ethiopia. This is of interest to Link Ethiopia staff in London and Ethiopia, as there is the potential for experienced and practised researchers (at the dissertation stage) to further explore aspects of Link Ethiopia's work from an academic and theoretical perspective.

Therefore, this small-scale report attempts to deliver on two aspects: firstly, to provide Link Ethiopia with insights into the unique experiences of students who are part of the programme, and secondly to outline a number of in-country context or methodological recommendations for future researchers to consider prior to research design or data collection. There may also be aspects of planning for research that Link Ethiopia need to consider, for example, ensuring that student data is collected and monitored from the beginning of the academic year rather than collecting retrospectively or during the research visit.

Background

The sponsorship programme aims to support students in accessing and succeeding in education; in particular, student attainment, improved career outcomes and increased wellbeing (specifically, the qualities of confidence and happiness). Within the context of this report, attention was paid to the concerns of Link Ethiopia in-country staff who are keen to undertake a rigorous evaluation of the sponsorship programme, in order to evidence identifiable and visible achievement of students in the programme. The aim of this first report is to support further conversations about future evaluations or research and to provide a replicable research design, which in-country staff can use and adapt.

Questions raised by Link Ethiopia staff

In order to determine the research questions that frame this report, Link Ethiopia staff raised questions they hoped any initial, and subsequent, follow-up research might go some way in answering. The questions were initially raised by Link Ethiopia staff in Bishoftu (the southern office) before being further discussed with the Regional and Country directors in Gondar (northern office).

The questions raised by staff included:

- Are the right children being recruited to the sponsorship programme?
- What does it mean to be 'needy'?
- Is the support being given as part of the current provision making a difference and, if so, is it making the right kind of difference?
- What kind of support works best?
- What do children/families think is the best type of support?

Another consideration raised by a number of the staff was the idea of wellbeing, with the words *confidence* and *happiness* mentioned as being important. If these qualities are key issues, then further consideration needs to be given as to how *soft* characteristics such as these might be measured or captured in some way. In addition, does the sponsorship programme currently provide, within the existing package of support, any resources that might address these issues?

In essence, Link Ethiopia wants to know:

- Does the Sponsorship programme work?
- Is it better than other sponsorship programmes offered by other charities?
- What are the key benefits of the current model?

One additional question Link wants to consider is:

- Is there an alternative sponsorship model that may better support families e.g., one based on direct financial support for families?

Objectives

As some of the questions raised by Link Ethiopia into the effectiveness of the sponsorship programme goes beyond the scope of this small report, three objectives were agreed and framed as research questions. The questions focus on the participation of a small sample of students within the sponsorship programme with the aim of capturing an individual's experience.

- In what ways do sponsored children perceive the sponsored experience?
- How do parents perceive the participation with the sponsorship programme on their child and the wider family?
- Does the sponsorship programme support children's aspirations for the future?

Key literature

There are a limited number of international and peer-reviewed studies that explicitly reference sponsorship programmes. The exception is the work by Wydick, Glewwe, and Rutledge (2013), who conducted a large six-country study on the impact of a large-scale sponsorship programme on adult life outcomes. The data drew on information about over 10,000 individuals across a two-year period from six developing countries: Bolivia, Guatemala, India, Kenya, the Philippines and Uganda. Education impacts were particularly strong across the two countries of specific interest to Link Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, with the programme being responsible for a significant increase in total years of schooling, with specific benefits to secondary school completion. Furthermore, the research suggests that being part of a sponsorship programme has an impact on the probability of adult employment and also increases the likelihood of a move into white-collar jobs.

The reasons for the finding are varied, but are due in part to the additional after-school study students attend (up to eight hours per week) which focuses on spiritual, physical and

‘socioemotional’ development (p.395). Over the course of the average length of time in the sponsorship programme (9.4 years), students have engaged in an additional 4,000 hours of additional learning. As a small organisation, Link Ethiopia cannot replicate such intensive and supplementary activities but the fact that the emphasis on emotional wellbeing has been evidenced as supporting students’ aspirations and life chances are worth consideration. A strength of Link Ethiopia’s programme is due to the small numbers of students who are sponsored, and the fact that the selection process ensures that a number of key staff know the students. Therefore, this type of additional emotional support could be tailored to the needs of the individual.

One report referenced by Wydick et al. (2013), is a small-scale study into a Dutch sponsorship programme, and one which best matches the Link model (Kremer et al, 2003); this project funds new classroom construction, a % of the sponsorship supports the purchase of a student’s school uniform and a further % funds school textbooks. Findings reported in another paper for the Young Lives research project into childhood poverty (Evans et al, 2012) suggests that purchasing school uniform for primary students who previously had no uniform impacts on attendance by as much as 53%. In addition, after five years, students in the participating or ‘treatment’ schools completed 15% more schooling, but after eight years there appeared to be no sustained impact. The authors posit that the increase in school attendance could be directly attributed to the provision of school uniform, as they reference other evaluations that suggest textbook provision makes no immediate difference. However, their study also alludes to the complexity of evaluating resource allocation as being directly responsible for increased school attendance, as in other cited studies based in South America, school uniform provision had an apparent and slight negative impact on attendance (Duflo et al, 2006).

There appear to be four types of international sponsorship programmes: those that focus on nutrition through the direct funding of meals; sponsorship of named children which supports local community development projects; programmes which fund parents directly, sometimes called conditional cash transfer; and low-cost intervention programmes focused on providing resources directly to students. Wydick et al’s research (2013), suggests that in the UK there are up to 43 organisations involved in child sponsorship. According to the website www.sponsorachild.org.uk, the seven largest charities operating in the UK (in order of size) SOS Children’s Villages, Muslim Aid, Plan UK, ActionAid UK, World Vision UK, Compassion UK. Until recently, the seventh EveryChild had a sponsorship programme but this has now been withdrawn to new supporters. In recent years, Plan International has also reconsidered its sponsorship model in light of findings from an evaluation of its programmes in four countries: Burkina Faso, Colombia, the Philippines and Uganda (Pettit & Shutt, 2008). The research focused on the developmental impacts of sponsorship procedures and communications with an emphasis on the experiences of both the sponsored children and their sponsors¹. Of concern, was the issue of unmet expectations, as not all children in the programme received correspondence or gifts from their sponsors, and not all children in the

¹ The Pettit & Shutt (2008) research will be of great interest to Link Ethiopia but as an embargoed document it is not publically available. However, the lead author at the University of Sussex can be contacted with a permission request for the document to be forwarded.

communities were sponsored. This had led to reports of jealousy amongst children and recommendation was for individual gifts to be phased out, and replaced with other forms of gift giving (p.51). Another interesting suggestion was for local language alternative words for *sponsor* and *sponsorship* to be used to avoid unrealistic expectations about the nature of the relationship.

One final point to note is that the majority of research into child sponsorship programmes (other than the Pettit & Shutt study) is quantitative in nature, understandably given that large-scale and impact are the drivers for researchers in the field of monitoring evaluation and learning. This is supported by a report into the work of Plan International (Olsen et al, 2012) that established that even with a database of 1.5 million children, ‘this data is only used to provide snapshots and identify trends pertaining to sponsored children and their living conditions’ (p.15). Therefore, any small-scale qualitative research that Link Ethiopia undertakes will contribute both to the future design of the sponsorship programme and to the broader debates about the impact of sponsorship programmes on young lives.

SECTION 3

Methodology

Research methods

The study used qualitative and participatory research methods in the form of semi-structured interviews with current students and their parent/guardian. In addition, one school link coordinator was interviewed and one focus group took place with six students, two of whom were interviewed individually.

Prior to visiting students in their homes, three meetings took place with key Link Ethiopia staff, two of these meetings took place with the regional and country directors in Gondar, the site of the majority of the data collection. One meeting took place with staff in Bishoftu and even though this was not the location of the fieldwork for this visit, there were two reasons for this. Firstly, it was important to gather as much background as possible, and secondly, more data collection may take place in other locations at a later date. The Sponsorship Coordinator (SC) accompanied the researcher and acted as a translator during the interviews. The translation was consecutive; the researcher asked each question before the SC translated it into Amharic, the participant then answered (either looking at the SC or the researcher), before the SC translated back into English. As the interviews were semi-structured, there was the opportunity to ask follow-up questions, which took the same format of consecutive translation. The researcher transcribed the audio-recorded interviews and the SC was able to confirm any areas of ambiguity. Within the findings section, *quotations* from the interviews are cited but they represent a paraphrased rather than direct translation.

Research process

MONTH	ACTIVITY	WHO
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May 2015	Selecting 10 possible beneficiaries	Sponsorship Coordinator (Gondar)
May 2015	Collation of data, school attainment and attendance	Sponsorship Coordinator (Gondar)
June 2015	Selection of final participants	Sponsorship Coordinator (Gondar), researcher, Projects and Finance Manager
June 2015	Design of research questions and ethical considerations	Country Director, Sponsorship Coordinator (Gondar), researcher
June 15 th – 22 nd 2015	Fieldwork interviews	Sponsorship Coordinator (Gondar), researcher
August 2015 – March 2016	Draft report write up	Researcher
April 2016	Final report agreed on	Researcher, Links and Communications Manager, Projects Manager and Finance Manager

Table 3.1 – Timeline of project

Geographical areas

The students were drawn from three different geographical areas: Gondar (both town and peri-urban) and Maksegnit. Students from Bahir Dar, a city 175km from Gondar, were also interviewed in order to include the voices across a range of settings. Of relevance is that the Regional Office for the North is based in Gondar, and students from the immediate area have relatively easy access to the office and the Sponsorship Coordinator.

Student data

Student data was collected both during the initial fieldwork and gathered by the Sponsorship Coordinator (Gondar) via the Projects and Finance Manager in London following the visit (Appendix A). One early challenge was the gathering of the end-of-year academic data from the schools and determining the process for validating both the student's final grade and the recorded school attendance.

Participants

Prior to the researcher's visit, the Sponsorship Coordinator (Gondar) compiled a list of 10 potential beneficiaries to be part of the research study, including attendance and attainment data (where available). Determining factors included: being in the programme for at least three years, geographical variation and a range of ages. At the first meeting, three students were chosen to take part in the case study, but on arrival in Gondar and in the meeting with the Country Director it was decided to extend the scope of the project to 9 students, which would allow Bahir Dar students to participate. In total four students in Gondar town were interviewed, one student from a semi-rural location near to Gondar, and one student from in a rural town 60km from Gondar. In Bahir Dar, six students took part in a focus group interview, two of whom were interviewed individually.

No	Student	Gender	Area	School	Grade	Sponsorship start date	Grade at sponsorship	Years in programme
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1	YM	F	Town	Hibret Elementary	6	04/08/2010	2	7
2	KE	F	Town	Atse Bekafa	3	28/03/2012	1	4
3	GT	M	Town	Azezo Secondary & Preparatory	11	19/12/2008	5	6
4	YF	F	Rural	Edget Feleg Secondary	10	18/12/2008	3	8
5	HE	F	Town	Makisegnit secondary	9	30/06/2011	4	6
6	KT	M	Semi-rural	Chechela Elementary	8	19/04/2011	4	6
7	TS	F	Town	Yekatit 23	KG	07/12/13	KG	2
8	AY	M	Town	Yekatit 23	6	03/12/10	1	5
9	BM	F	Town	Yekatit 23	6	03/12/10	1	5

Table 3.2 – Student data

Interviews

The interviews with students and their parents/guardians, and the focus group were semi-structured, which allowed for additional follow up questions to be asked (Appendices D – F). The interview questions were based on a previous internal evaluation of the Kindu Trust programme and adapted and agreed following a meeting with the Country Director. As the interviews got underway some of the wording was adapted to reflect the type of answers being given, or to reflect some of an apparent discomfort of the questions being asked. For example, one of the original questions (Appendix C) asked parents/guardians to reflect on whether being part of the sponsorship had led to feelings of jealousy in the community. Having asked the question the first time, it was evident that this was a culturally sensitive question (despite being based on wording from the Kindu Trust evaluation) and was reworded, *‘Do you talk to your friends and neighbours about the sponsorship programme?’* Another question changed due to responses being limited to praising the support for the sponsorship programme, which, whilst positive, did not allow participants to offer responses other than that they were very happy to be a part of it. The wording changed to anticipate the positive response by asking, *‘Why are you happy to be part of the Link Ethiopia programme?’* and this led to more open-ended responses. This response also led to a key issue for any future fieldwork with parents in that there was an assumption that the researcher was not independent but worked for Link Ethiopia; and, on more than one occasion, the researcher was thanked for the work of Link Ethiopia. This will be something for future research to consider and to question whether it is an anticipated response, or whether measures can be put in place to limit this. However, it is a recognised issue in conducting research in developing countries, as will be highlighted in the next section (Ethical considerations).

All, bar one, of the interviews with parents/guardians and students took place in the home setting, as the interview with the Kindergarten student took place in school. In every interview, the student was interviewed first, followed by their parent/guardian, which enabled the students to talk freely without reflecting, necessarily, the views of the adult. The focus group interview took place in the school with the school link coordinator present, followed by the school link

coordinator interview. Whilst the interview process was the same for both adults and students, the questions differed (Appendices D-F), with the aim of capturing the individual views of the participants, rather than making the assumption that the students would be less competent respondents than the adults (Punch, 2002).

One other tool was used during the interview, which was the use of the 'Could you show me' approach?' when asking students to share resources they had received from Link Ethiopia or their sponsors. This approach was considered to be more sensitive to the home context, but it was only used when responding to students listing the resources they had received.

Ethical considerations

Any participatory research involving children needs to fully consider the power relations that may be enacted (Morrow, 2002), therefore, it was important to ensure that at the start of each interview an agreed ethics statement was shared and that participation was voluntary (Appendix B). As previously mentioned, there are issues with research remaining independent when it is carried out for an organisation whilst involving members of staff, either as facilitators or translators. However, it may be that this is a situation that is unavoidable, but future research should consider how best to mitigate any participant feeling they should take part, or make it difficult to refuse to take part. For example, whilst the situation did not arise in this study's research visits; Morrow (2002) gives an example of parents not fully understanding the notion of research and instead seeing the process as 'an intervention to provide individual children with a better life' (p.4). There is much in the report by Morrow (2002) for the Young Lives project that would be of interest to future researchers and I would recommend this as essential reading.

One benefit of the visits being facilitated by Link Ethiopia staff is that it helped establish a rapport with the family from the outset. In each case, the student knew the Sponsorship Coordinator, which ensured the purpose of the interview was clearly explained and allowed the researcher to move into developing a research relationship with the students. The decision was also made for parents to gate-keep the process by obtaining their permission for their child to be involved and by asking them to be present during the interview.

Final dataset

The final dataset comprised: nine interviews with students and parent/guardian, one interview with a school link coordinator, and one focus group interview. Each school has a School Link Coordinator, assigned to be the key contact for both the students and Link Ethiopia, but only one coordinator was available to be interviewed for this report. Even though the findings from the interviews are drawn from a small dataset, the report does not assume to present the findings as an evaluation into the effectiveness or impact of the programme; however, it does aim to demonstrate representative experiences of the students. Essentially, each student has his or her own personal story, and what this report aims to do is to capture a sense of what it means to be a student participating in the programme and the minor, but significant, difference it makes to their lives. The notion of 'small stories' (Georgakopoulou, 2007) is used in the context of this report as a way of sharing the implications of the shared features of the students and their family context

and the specific sites of home and school engagement. This was an advantage of choosing a qualitative research approach, as there was an opportunity to create a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973:311) that attempts to capture the children's experiences in such a way that new insights can be formed and acted on.

The data was analysed using a simplified form of thematic analysis, which sought to identify themes and patterns across the final dataset supported by direct quotations from the participants. Therefore, the aim of this report is to capture the experiences of these specific students as being representative within the context of the total number of students within Link Ethiopia's standard sponsorship programme (202). It makes recommendations rather than conclusions, as the nature of the report is based on a one-week period of fieldwork and, therefore, it is a small-scale snapshot, rather than a full evaluation of the programme.

SECTION 4

Findings

Participant profile

Of the nine children interviewed, all but one child was interviewed alongside their parent/guardian. The youngest child was not interviewed because it was felt inappropriate due to her young age. There were six girls and three boys, all of who were in full-time education from Kindergarten to Year 11. Six of the students were from a range of schools in the Gondar region, with the remaining three all from the same school in Bahir Dar. The average number of years the students had been part of the sponsorship programme was 5.5 years (range = 2 – 8 years; median = 6; mode = 6 years). Three of the children had failed grades in school, with one failing two grades. The absences data was reported, but due to some queries about the rigour in data collection, are not reported are. The same is true of the end-of-year attainment.

In terms of the children's family set up, five students live with their mother or father, three live with a grandmother and one student lives with an aunt. All bar the young child who lives with her father are in a matriarchal home due to all eight fathers having died (the cause of death was not asked but was sometimes shared or the Sponsorship Coordinator reported on the students' case histories). Six of the children were either the eldest or only child; one student has three siblings, and one has two siblings (none of whom are involved in the sponsorship programme).

In terms of additional Link Ethiopia activities in school, six of the children have been involved in Sponsorship Club meetings and three have benefited from additional tutorial lessons. Five of the students (three in the same school) are in schools with more than 5 beneficiaries.

Three themes

The findings are drawn from the interview transcripts and were collated using a simplified form of thematic analysis. Each transcript was coded according to the similar themes identified across the dataset and four candidate themes were put forward (Braun & Clarke, 2008:20); Remembered

resources; Aspirations of education; Programme benefits; and Programme Improvements. The themes were then reviewed and the coded data re-read to ensure that potential points of interest had not been missed. This final stage of the process also confirmed the theme's definition.

Theme	Definition
REMEMBERED RESOURCES	<i>The specific resources referred to by participants, including those shared through showing and the places they are kept.</i>
ASPIRATIONS OF EDUCATION	<i>What hopes the participants have for their future or long-term ambitions reflected in their discussions about the role of education (tmhrt) or employment ambitions.</i>
PROGRAMME IMPROVEMENTS	<i>Suggestions from the participants of how the programme might be extended or adapted to serve a broader purpose.</i>

Table 4.1: Defining and naming themes

The three themes are used to present the findings in the following section. Each theme is discussed separately before a summary in Section 5 (Recommendations) attempts to draw out key points for Link Ethiopia to consider in future planning.

Remembered resources

Both students and their guardians were asked to recall the resources they receive as part of the sponsorship programme. The most commonly mentioned were the school stationery, especially exercise books, pens/pencils and the school bag. Depending on the age of the student, reference books and dictionaries were frequently referenced and of all the resources, these were most commonly shared with family members. In one case, the student shared his biology textbook with his older cousin who is a nurse. Clothes and school uniform were also referred to but these were often talked of separately so it is difficult to ascertain whether uniform and clothes are the same. The Sponsorship Coordinator mentioned that in previous years, Link Ethiopia had provided new shoes and clothes on a student's birthday; as some of the students have been in the programme for a number of years they may be referring to these when they talk about *clothes*. A number of children were wearing their school uniform and the youngest interviewee was wearing the dress she had been bought by her sponsor.

When asked where the resources were kept, the students immediately found them and knew exactly where they were kept: under beds, in piles of books in the main room, and in one case the items had been packed away because the school year had finished. There was a sense, in the way the items were talked about and shared, that these were important possessions for the children and young people, a point reiterated by the School Link Coordinator:

The children can use the books, there are lots of books in school but with these books they can say 'this is mine'. Family members can share it and that is the advice I give them in case they don't get it back.

School Link Coordinator

One of the boys was very open about his family situation and how it compares with that of his school friends.

I shared the exercise book, which is enough to me, and after I have used it myself, I share with my sister. Most of my friends come from rich families and they don't expect anything from me.

18-year-old young man

The students also alluded to the importance of owning the resources they receive and how it enables them to be seen as being the same by the other students and teachers.

For only just studying purpose, the other things I like to keep for myself.

15-year-old girl

This point was strongly felt by parents and guardians, as they were able to identify that without the resources the children would not be able to attend school, where the expectation is that children wear the correct uniform and are supplied with stationery.

If Link didn't provide them then she would drop out of school. There is a significant different. She is with her peers and friends. She gets the same as the other children.

Grandmother of 15-year-old student

Several parents mentioned a key benefit of being part of the programme is the removal of concerns about finding the money to provide school resources, *'It has made a big difference to my life, as I don't have to think about school resources'* (Father of 5-year-old girl). In other homes, family members talked about *'not worrying about the responsibility'* (Mother of 15-year-old boy), and the notion that the programme helps them when they themselves cannot *'cover all their needs'* (Aunt of 15-year-old girl).

One of the study's aims was to provide insights into whether the programme was targeting the most appropriate children. As well as parents being grateful for the removal of an additional burden in providing statutory equipment for their children to attend school, comments made by the children also demonstrated their understanding of the links between access and success. Despite the young age of some of the participants, they are aware of the importance of the resources in supporting them to succeed at school. Comments like the following were not uncommon:

... there was a scarcity of different resources in the home but I am very happy since that I have school resources and it has its own benefits for my school.

The provision of school uniform promotes a sense of identification with school and being part of the school community and, as such, the direct provision of resources to the family removes potential barriers for these vulnerable young people in accessing education. As with any study that involves children and young people, it is always their words that best capture what is important in their lives.

Before I was sponsored I was worried about how I could get the uniform and stationery and went to school without the right uniform. There were psychological problems in my mind but when I was a Grade 5 student I had what I need. Now in September, I give all responsibility for uniform and stationery to Link.

18-year-old young man

The provision of school-required, practical resources directly impacts on the students' access to education. As the attendance data is unreliable, it is only possible to reflect on the students' self-reported attitudes towards school, which were positive in every case. Whilst it is not possible to make a direct correlation between enjoyment and attendance, the anecdotal comments would suggest these children are frequent attenders. One 15-year-old girl brought up the issue of attendance being related to her menstrual cycle, in that she frequently misses one week every month due to the lack of appropriate toilet and hygiene facilities. Whether Link Ethiopia is able to influence this agenda with schools or with other local organisations is worth consideration, but it is beyond the scope of discussion in this report.

Aspirations and education

Being able to answer if the right students are being recruited to the sponsorship programme can really only be considered alongside whether the current support is making a difference to the lives of the students. Whilst reflections on the usefulness of school resources in supporting a student's sense of belonging and readiness for school suggests there is an impact, what remains crucial is in evidencing whether the current support makes the right kind of difference. In terms of Link Ethiopia's core aim to remove barriers to quality education for vulnerable students, the relationship needs to be reciprocal. There are limited gains in selecting students to benefit from additional financial and practical support if they themselves do not appreciate the education they receive. Therefore, when interviewing the students, it was important to ask questions about school activities, favourite subjects, relationships with teachers and what they saw as the purpose of education (tmhrt). The children and young people were also asked about future aspirations and the kind of jobs they saw themselves doing when they were older. Whilst these may be dreams for the future, their responses do provide insights into the possible occupations these children believe are open to them. It is recognized that a student's performance at school, alongside their motivation and attitudes to different subjects, can have 'significant influences on their further education and occupational pathways' (OECD, 2004:104). However, it should be noted this data is

drawn from the Performance for International Student Assessment across fourteen countries (none of which are from Sub-Saharan Africa).

The students' favourite subjects at school are based around the core subjects of maths, English, Amharic and science and the social sciences. One of the girls enjoys learning about health and two of the girls enjoy the outdoor sports of running and football. Where students reported they liked particular teachers, it often corresponded that this was also their favourite subject. Students were very respectful of their relationships with their teachers and appeared to have insights into the particular pedagogical approaches and its impact on their learning.

I like my teachers; whenever I encounter any challenge of difficulty, I just ask them. I like the history teacher very much. He explains everything orally, and I like that.

15-year-old girl

I like my teachers, they are good at teaching and whenever we meet any difficulties they help us individually. I like all of them but for future and what I would like to do, I like the economics teacher.

18-year-old young man

The best teacher is the English teacher because whenever she teaches us we are eager to follow up our learning.

11-year-old boy

For two of the younger children (aged 10 and 12), it was important to stress their role in the promotion of a positive relationship with their teachers.

When they come to the classroom, I stand to show my respect. Whenever they ask a question, I can confidently answer them.

12-year-old girl

Different teachers have different attitudes towards me. The teachers like me; I am well disciplined in the classroom subjects. I participate in class and I try to learn English.

10-year-old girl

The same question was asked to both guardians/parents and the students, which focused on the notion of 'tmhrt' (education). Even for those who found some of the other questions more challenging were able to offer insights into the value they personally place on education and its importance for the next generation.

He has made good progress with his education. He is very good and is always thinking about his learning.

A number of responses focused on the importance of education, described by one grandmother and one father as being *‘the basis of everything’* and there was an understanding by all the participants of the doors that a good education can offer with the potential of leading to higher education. The hopes, in particular, for those students living with their grandmothers, were evident, suggesting a moral and economic imperative for their charges.

She hasn’t parents, so I don’t want her to be someone who works in a café, or such people. I know lots of people who work there; it is not good for her future life.

Grandmother of 15-year-old girl

For four respondents (three mothers and one aunt) their responses to the value of education were framed within their personal experiences. For some, they had made different choices earlier in the lives and wished for something better for their own son, daughters and niece.

I was not good at learning. If I learn in school, nowadays, I would be able to manage my family and other relatives.

Mother of 14-year-old girl

I couldn’t write anything, since I am illiterate; if I had learned I would be somewhere like my friends in different organisations. I make injera for families and as a daily labourer, which is a hard job.

Mother of 10-year-old girl

I dropped out when I was a Grade 6 student, so education is important.

Aunt of 12-year-old girl

My family was not given the chance to learn for me, so he has a chance to learn.

Mother of 18-year-old young man

Despite the prevalence of early marriage in Ethiopia, with almost 50% of girls being married by the age of 15 (Population Council and UNFPA, 2009), none of the guardians or parents made mention of this as an inevitable part of their daughter or granddaughter’s future.

When asked what jobs they saw themselves doing, the nine focus children talked of professional jobs including doctors, accountants and. When the students from the focus group were asked they also mentioned becoming architects or engineers.

Focus children and young people	Focus group
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Actress Paediatrician Actress or business woman Actress Bank accountant Childrens doctor Doctor specializing in HIV/Aids Medical doctor\specialist doctor	Architect (F) (to build different buildings); actress (F); engineer to build different buildings (F); medical doctor to help her community (F); a doctor specialising in HIV/Aids (M)**; a medical doctor (F)**; nurse because he wants to help patients (M); doctor so he can help (M); scientist to study the world (M).
* 5-year-old not included	** Two students were also part of the individual interviews people; therefore, their responses are listed twice. *** Two responses inaudible

Table 4.2: Aspirations for the future

Whilst such aspirations are encouraging, it could be questioned whether these young people are setting realistic goals and if they have the potential to succeed well enough in school, a process that involves passing their Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate exam in Grade 10, being selected for a 2-year preparatory programme prior to complete their Higher Education Entrance Certificate in Grade 12 at a high enough grade to be selected for their chosen subject. As previously mentioned, three out of the nine focus students had failed school grades and, therefore, a consideration for Link Ethiopia is whether there is a role for providing training or additional guidance for these young people. Only one of the older boys in the focus group mentioned being a nurse, rather than a doctor and his prime consideration was that he wanted to help patients, rather than cure disease. For the two students who hope to be medical doctors, specializing in HIV/Aids, they are both living with relatives who have the virus.

As with their guardians/parents, the students were in no doubt as to the value of education and how being successful at school has the potential to improve and change their lives. For a study that attempts to best represent the voices of its participants, their responses are listed here rather than through an attempt to précis and produce a narrative.

Student	Response
14-year-old girl	<i>A means of buying knowledge; education is the means to be somewhere in the future.</i>
15-year-old boy	<i>It helps to arrive somewhere.</i>
17-year-old boy	<i>Education is the way to know, so I go to school to know.</i>
15-year-old girl	<i>It is the basis for my future life. Education [inaudible], no measurement to explain how important it is.</i>
18-year-old young man	<i>I can see the difference in between the ones who are literate and the illiterate. The literate ones can do things on his own through the knowledge he gets from the school.</i>

10-year-old girl	<i>It is full because it is knowledge for me. If I haven't knowledge for me. It gives me all things for me and we can consider education as a wealth.</i>
11-year-old boy	<i>Education is the way to get knowledge and we govern our future lives through education.</i>
12-year-old girl	<i>Education is a means of having knowledge, without school or somewhere or special area to learn we couldn't gain knowledge.</i>

Table 4.2: What does the word **tmhrt** mean to you?

When asked which adults in their lives provide guidance about their future, those students living with their grandmothers mentioned other family members, including aunts and uncles. Sometimes these relatives live a distance away and they only meet occasionally but their importance as a guiding influence was evident, this was especially important for young women.

My aunt - she tries to protect me from many bad things, now that I am at an age [aged 15] she protects and controls from any bad things.

15-year-old girl

The students also seek support and guidance from school staff, including Home Room teachers and teachers in the earlier grades, for example, Grade 1. For two focus students who are in a school with a large cohort of students in the Sponsorship Programme, the advice offered by the designated and active School Link Coordinator is invaluable.

We haven't received any special training, but the school Link Coordinator gives us what she is able to and when she can.

Focus group interview (ages 11-16)

The Coordinator likens this additional role to being a parent and she is aware that there is a value in sharing personal experiences with the children, *'I tell the students about my life cycle and I act as the mother for the students'*. For those students living with grandmothers, who had very different experiences of school and education (only 36% of the 15+ years adult population are literate, *UNESCO, 2010*), knowing where to access additional is vital. According to the School Link Coordinator, there is a role here for Link Ethiopia; *'They must guide the students, just as a parent'*.

As well as significant role models, students also access guidance through the various training programmes that are offered in school; some of these are school-based projects whilst others are provided via NGO services. A number of the students had taken part in training around peer pressure; HIV/Aids awareness; health-based training attached to a blood bank programme; and medication and prescription interventions. Also mentioned were one sports-based programme from the Federal Sports Commission and one based on the one to five model of working with others.

Programme improvements

When asked about in what ways the Link Ethiopia programme could be improved, many of the young people mentioned potential training opportunities that may support their education or career aspirations.

Lessons to support future job - being a doctor.

11-year-old boy

Related to lessons or improving my learning to be a better student.

12-year-old girl

There was also an awareness for the older students (boys in particular) that HIV/Aids presents a very real concern, either through family experience and bereavement or as they begin to embark on their own relationships.

I don't have a girlfriend, but I would like to know how to protect myself.

18-year-old young man

For the adults (including the School Link Coordinator), the one improvement the programme could make is related to the children's access to a nutritional and balanced diet.

She needs to have food in her belly; if she has food then she can do anything. Unless she gets any meals from her home, how can she study in school? Eye is always on meal. If she has breakfast, lunch, dinner she can do very well in school.

Grandmother of 17-year-old girl

There is a scarcity of food; it would be good if the organisation could cover his meals, in addition to the resources.

Mother of 18-year-old young man

The other key issue that parents/guardians mentions (in particular, two mothers and an aunt) was the possibility of the programme supporting the parents' employment potential through the granting of business loans. Two of the women are employed in seasonal work, selling tella (a traditional Ethiopian beer brewed from local grains) and making injera (a sour-dough flat bread and national dish of Ethiopia). These women made the link between their own personal aspirations to improve their family's economic situation, and subsequent educational opportunities for their children 'So, if I get some other small business, or if there is some other small business area, he will get the chance to study by himself.' (Mother of 11-year-old young man).

For the mother of one young girl, her concern focuses on her ability to be a good role model for her daughter, as she currently makes a meagre living selling chat and coffee. Whilst it is not illegal

to sell, the mother was concerned that her daughter was being exposed to potentially undesirable influences.

Whilst not mentioned specifically as an improvement, it was noted by the researcher that the additional work and support offered by the school Link Coordinator has been significant in facilitating the student's success. There was an opportunity for the students to join with an initiative hosted at the private school, Bahir Dar Academy in partnership with the University of Cambridge (UK). Students from all institutions spent 21 days at the Academy working alongside each other and sharing educational and cultural experiences. The school Link Coordinator had initially made contact with the Academy 6 years ago, and the most recent project is the pinnacle of her belief that the students on the sponsorship programme need to be exposed to many additional experiences, *'they need additional help because they do not get enough at home'*. She mentioned an increase in confidence displayed by the students both in terms of interacting with adults (e.g. the School Director) and by being proactive in making arrangements for the project. The students were aware and appreciative of the project.

The school Link Coordinator gives us what she is able to and when she can. We thank her very much as she tries lots of things for us, including a trip to Bahir Dar Academy. She gives us the opportunity to practise what we saw at the school.

Focus group (collated comments)

Whether this particular group of 11 students has benefited from this type of intervention, in terms of creating a sense of group identity and cohesion is hard to evidence. However, there was an indication that this distinct group offered each other support and friendship.

I enjoyed going to Bahir Dar Academy with the group of students on the programme.

11-year-old boy

There were more obvious friendships based on being members of the sponsorship programme within the focus group than it appeared to be for those who were in schools with fewer members. For example, two focus group students who were also interviewed individually were able to name a number of the other students and also explain that two or three were also friends. One 10-year-old girl is in a school with 5+ beneficiaries and she knows five other children who are all close friends, *'Before we were sponsored by this organization we did not know each other'*.

Link Ethiopia's sponsorship literature outlines that additional tuition should be made available where there are more than 5+ beneficiaries in the same school. The two schools above had delivered these sessions and it may be possible to make a link between the notion of connected friendships of those with similar backgrounds and positive identity.

For four of the students who were in schools with fewer than 5 beneficiaries, they were also asked if others were aware of their participation in the programme. Their responses suggest a slightly different relationship between being part of the programme and the information being common knowledge, *'Yes - but I don't mind that they know'* (15-year-old boy) and *'Yes - they are happy about*

it' (15-year-old girl). This may be an area that Link Ethiopia continues to consider as being part of the tracking of student progress in terms of aspirations and peer support which, whilst not an explicit aim, may be considered a positive outcome of programme membership.

SECTION 5

Conclusion and recommendations

The sponsorship programme appears to benefit the participants both emotionally and practically. The physical resources support these vulnerable students in attending school, so that they are equipped with the correct uniform and have the appropriate school stationery. This allows the students to avoid being seen as different by both their peers and their teachers and removes any potential stigmatisation. The students are aware and appreciative of this. Whilst not an outcome that is easy to quantify, the wellbeing aspect of the programme was frequently mentioned by students as being a key contributor to their success at school. Some of the students have previously failed school grades but, for the most part, for these students, once they joined the sponsorship programme, they have benefited from the additional support provided by in-school coordinators, the Link Ethiopia Sponsorship Coordinator and local staff.

One key question for Link Ethiopia staff focused on whether students who are identified as being eligible to join the standard sponsorship scheme are the right students. Having spent time in the company of 15 students, it was evident from the aspirations they shared and the value they place on their education that they are benefiting from being part of the programme. Whilst some students received regular contact from their sponsors, unlike the findings from Pettit & Shutt (2008), there was no apparent issue that this might be an inequitable situation. Where the programme appeared to work best was where students felt supported at school, and this was most evident in the focus group school. The role of the School Link Coordinator was crucial to the students' sense of well-being and belonging, and they clearly valued the additional experiences she had been able to provide for them. This notion of effective role models was reflected in the students' ability to share examples of the other adults in their lives who offer them support and advice. This is an important aspect for Link Ethiopia to consider, as out of the nine students interviewed, only five live with a parent, as the other four live with extended family members i.e., their grandmother or aunt. Whilst, it is not unusual for children to live with extended family members, what was of note was that students' circumstances had changed due to the death of one or both parents, which whilst a vulnerability factor, consideration should be given to those who are supporting the children in the home. Where adults have limited experience of education (as shared in the interviews), it will be important for Link Ethiopia to consider whether there is a role for them in providing additional support for students in the sponsorship programme as they reach the secondary phase of education.

The benefit of Link Ethiopia's sponsorship programme, which differs to larger organisations, is its focus on directly changing the life chances of individual students, rather than being primarily a fundraising initiative. Therefore, any future model of sponsorship needs to consider how it can continue to best support its aim of 'improving access to quality education for all students' by

supporting students' progress through school. One issue raised in the interviews was that three out of the nine students had in recent years failed a grade and had subsequently repeated a school year. If these students are part of a programme that aims to highlight the importance of education, it may be worth considering if there is a mechanism for school Link Coordinators to inform the Sponsorship Coordinator if a student is at risk of failing, for example, collecting semester one (mid-year) results. An aspirational aim of the sponsorship programme is to monitor the progress of the students, which does happen at a local level via the local Sponsorship Coordinator; however, it is dependent on schools providing robust attainment and attendance data. End-of-year test data is made available but, as a key aim is to remove barriers to learning to promote successful outcomes for students, it would be more helpful for Link Ethiopia's Sponsorship Coordinator to be made aware of when a student was at risk of failing (see Section Six), which can only be achieved through regular monitoring.

One other desirable outcome is for Link Ethiopia to monitor alumni as they move into their first jobs in order to capture the long-term perceived benefits of the programme. Whilst this would add cost and complexity to any future research design, it would allow Link Ethiopia to assess both the young people's resilience and how their aspirations match with their longer-term futures. Additional benefits include capturing student success stories as a showcase for donor beneficiaries and there would also be an opportunity to harness the potentially rich resource of role models for younger students.

The recommendations below draw on the findings presented in the previous section and aim to raise issues and questions for future, and possibly lead to more extensive or longitudinal research projects. Therefore, the recommendations are presented in two sections; firstly, what was learned about the stories from these particular children and the potential impact on Link's future decision-making and secondly, methodological and ethical next steps that may be useful to share with future researchers.

Learning from small stories: research areas

- Consider continuing to track the progress of the nine students who took part in this small-scale study as a longitudinal project. There is an appropriate spread of age range across the students, which would ensure that the students' journey from elementary school into employment could be followed.
- Consider undertaking a full evaluation of the programme, in terms of student success, attainment and school attendance, rather than on the experience of being part of the sponsorship programme. Designing a mixed-methods approach that involves drawing on existing data, as well as using qualitative tools including interviews/focus groups/innovative approaches to participatory research with all stakeholders, would enable Link Ethiopia to answer the question about programme effectiveness.
- An evaluation of this kind may help Link Ethiopia consider if the current model is fit for purpose; or whether moving to supporting a school food programme; a direct payment or conditional payment programme; or, moving to a community development programme may have advantages.

- One other form or element of an evaluation could be into the impact of the programme beyond the individual by considering its influence on the student cohort and/or community.
- However, it is strongly suggested that any future research includes alumni students, as their stories and post-sponsorship experiences are worth capturing.

Learning from small stories: methodological issues

- Consider ways of managing the apparent and perceived need to offer the researcher hospitality (whilst appreciated, these families, by the very nature of being part of the sponsorship programme, already have limited resources). For example, it may be possible to meet the families in a different location; however, there are issues with this in terms of finding a neutral venue (the school) or the Link Ethiopia offices
- Agree with new researchers on the use of terminology to describe students who are part of the sponsorship programme; it is important to avoid terms, which may appear to be proprietary, like *sponsored* children or students. There is some mixed use over the term *beneficiary*, and it is important to consider whether it is an appropriate term.
- As discussed, there is a need to mitigate any potential negative consequences of the researcher as being seen as part of Link Ethiopia, rather than independent. Decisions around whether to use an independent translator will have ethical, financial and time resource implications. It could also be argued that even if the translator is unknown to the family, the fact that the questions relate to Link Ethiopia will associate both the researcher and the translator with Link Ethiopia.
- For future research, review the process for collecting *live* school attainment data, rather than gathering it at the end of the project. This point may also link to the final point above about being aware of student progress throughout the year.
- Consider applying for funding to fund desktop research that draws together the features or distinctive characteristics of sponsorship programmes across the seven key charities.

Learning from small stories: project recommendations

- Consider differentiating the existing resources according to age. This may mean changing the nature of existing support from providing school stationery for younger students to a focus on life skills or training for those aged 14+.
- Discuss the feasibility of providing support for grandmothers/guardians who may not have the resources to offer mentoring advice about school/employment.
- Investigate joint partnership working with charities offering food programmes.
- Review ways of building on the school support offered to students via a school Link Coordinator, building on existing good practice models.
- Consider the importance of schools alerting the Sponsorship Coordinator to possible issues around attainment in school and/or risk of failure.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Full set of participant data

Name	Gender	Age	School	Years In programme	Current grade	Grade at s/ship	Number of failed grades	Days absent 2014-2015	Parent/ Guardian in the home	Mother & Father alive?	Siblings & position in the family	Exam results – English Science Maths	School with 5+ beneficiaries?	S/ship club meeting?	Attended tutorial classes?
YM	F	14	Hibret	04/08/10 7 years	6	2	2 – Grades x & x	1	Mother	Yes/No	1 1st	42/49/47	No	No	No
KE	F	10	Atse Bekafa	28/03/12 4 years	3	1	1 – Grades x	0	Mother	Yes/No	1 2nd	61.5/77/ 80	Yes	Yes	Yes
GT	M	18	Azezo Secondary & Preparatory School	19/12/08 6 years	11	5	0	0	Mother	Yes/No	4 3rd		No	Yes	No
YF	F	17	Edget Feleg	18/12/08 8 years	10	3	0	5	Grandmother	No/No	2 1st		Yes	Yes	No
HE	F	15	Maksegnit	30/06/11 6 years	9	4	0	3	Grandmother	No/No	0 1st		No	No	No
KT	M	15	Chechela	19/04/11 6 years	8	4	1 – Grade 8		Grandmother	No/No	2 3rd		No	Yes	No
TS	F	6	Yekatit 23	07/12/13 2 years	KG	kg-1	0	Several	Father	No/Yes	1 1st		Yes	No	No
AY	M	11	Yekatit 23	03/12/10 5 years	6	1	0	0	Mother	Yes/No	0 1st	61/66.5/ 66	Yes	Yes	Yes
BM	F	12	Yekatit 23	03/12/10 5 years	6	1	0	Two	Aunt	No/No	0 1st	66/70.5/ 60.5	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix B

Ethics shared prior to interview

Thank you for talking to us. It's important that you are happy:

- To talk to me about the Link Ethiopia sponsorship programme;
- That you understand that your answers are confidential and your names will not be mentioned in the report;
- That you are happy for the interview to be audio recorded.

Safeguarding – parents/guardian to be present

Appendix C

Original interview questions

Interview questions – Parents/guardians

How many sons and daughters do you have?

In what ways does Link support your family?

What resources do they provide?

How did you collect the resources?

Has the child sponsorship practice helped in the development of your family?

Were other children in your family sponsored?

What difference do you think it has made to xxxxx?

Does child sponsorship make some families feel jealous of your family?

How do you think Link can further support your family?

Have there been any changes in your family that has resulted from the sponsorship?

Which activities are most useful for your family?

Which activities are most useful for xxxxx?

Is there anything else that you think Link could do to be more useful for your family?

What job does xxxxx want when she/he is older?

Do you think xxxxx likes school? What does he/she like about it?

Was this the same for xxxxx [siblings]?

What does the word **education** mean to you?

Interview questions – Students

How many brothers and sisters do you have? Are they older or younger than you?

In what ways does Link support you?

What resources do they provide for you?

Do you share your resources or supplies that you get from Link or your sponsor with your siblings or friends?

What activities are you involved in at school?

What is your favourite subject?

Do you enjoy school?

How do you get on with your teachers? How do you get on with the other children?

Which Link activities do you enjoy the most?

Have you ever received anything from your sponsor? Can you show me?

How did you feel about this?

What resources does Link provide you with? Can you show me?

Have you taken part in any life skills activities? Would that be useful?

Do you have any other adults, apart from your parents, who help you think about your future?

Do other students know you're a sponsored child?

What do they think about it?

Is it talked about at school, at home?

Now you are older, what do you think about the experience of having been sponsored by Link?

Do you think being in the sponsorship programme has made a difference to your education?

What do you want to do in the future? What job?

What does the word **education** mean to you?

Appendix D

Final interview questions

Interview questions – Students

How many brothers and sisters do you have? Are they older or younger than you?
What resources does Link provide you with? Do you keep them in the house?
How do you receive your resources? From school?
Do you share your resources or supplies that you get from Link with your friends or siblings?
What activities are you involved in at school?
What is your favourite subject?
Do you enjoy school?
How do you get on with your teachers?
What is your relationship like with other students?
Tell me about your sponsor. What do you know?
Have you ever received anything from them? Can you show me?
How did you feel about this?
In school, do you know any other children in the sponsorship programme? Are they friends of yours?
Have you had any training in any of these areas: Peer pressure, HIV/AIDS, confidence, life challenges, about your future job? Was it useful? Would you like more of this? If so, in which areas?
Do you have any other adults, apart from your mother, who help you think about your future?
How many years have you been part of the sponsorship programme? Have you ever failed a grade?
Why are you happy to be part of the Link Ethiopia programme?
More specifically, do you think being in the sponsorship programme has made a difference to your education?
What do you want to do in the future? What job?
*What does the word **education (tmhrt)** mean to you?*

Interview questions – Parents/guardian

In what ways does Link support your family?
How did you find out that xxxxxxxx was going to be part of the programme?
Were other children in your family sponsored?
What difference do you think Link Ethiopia has made to xxxxxxxx life?
Do you know the name of her sponsor?
Do you talk to your friends and neighbours about the sponsorship programme?
How do you think Link can further support your family?
*What does the word **education** mean to you?*

Appendix E

Interview questions – School Link Coordinator

Tell me about the resources Link provides the children with?

How do you receive your resources?

Do you notice the children sharing the resources or supplies that you get from Link with your friends?

What activities can they get involved in at school?

Do the children tell you what they like/dislike about school?

Have the children ever received school visits from their sponsors?

In school, do the sponsored children become friends with each other?

Does the school provide any training in any of these areas: Peer pressure, HIV/AIDS, confidence, English lessons, life challenges, about future jobs? Do you think it would be useful? Are there any subjects you would include?

Do you think the children are happy to be part of the Link Ethiopia programme?

More specifically, do you think being in the sponsorship programme has made a difference, or had an impact on the students' education?

Tell me about the Sponsorship Club?

*What does the word **education (timhrt)** mean to you?*

What do you think makes the difference for children to stay in school? Do you think the Link resources help them to stay in school?

If a student is not doing well in class, do their teachers tell you?

Is there anything you can do to support the student? Is there anything Link could do?

What do you think makes the difference for children to stay in school? Do you think the Link resources help them to stay in school?

What more could Link do to support the children?

Appendix F

Focus Group questions

Tell me about the resources Link provides you with? How do you receive your resources?

Do you share the resources or supplies that you get from Link with your friends?

What activities do you get involved in at school?

What do you like/dislike about school?

Why are happy to be part of the Link Ethiopia programme?

More specifically, do you think being in the sponsorship programme has made a difference, or had an impact on your education?

Tell me about the Sponsorship Club?

Is there anything more Link Ethiopia could do to sup

Tell me about what school means to you.

Appendix G

Additional audio recorded alumni interview

Dropbox: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/6x9k1ikhjk1kwc6/20150625%20090435-1.m4a?dl=0>